

# NOAA Research Vessel Exceeds International Standards as Quiet Vessel



The newly constructed NOAA fishery survey vessel Henry B. Bigelow has exceeded international standards as an acoustically quiet vessel, according to a report released by the U.S. Navy. NOAA received the results from a battery of underwater acoustic tests done by the Navy on the ship at the Atlantic Undersea Test and Evaluation Center on Andros Island in the Bahamas.

With her dramatically lower background noise levels, this ship will enhance NOAA's ability to use the most sophisticated acoustic devices to assess fish stocks. The noise radiated by the 208-foot vessel was carefully compared by the Navy to noise recommendations established by the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea, a respected international organization that includes more than 1,600 marine scientists from 20

countries that surround the North Atlantic.

Because Henry B. Bigelow does not produce disruptive background noise, researchers can count fish and assess the size, health and behavior of stocks with highly sensitive acoustic devices. Trawl surveys also conducted by Henry B. Bigelow will be greatly enhanced by the new acoustic quieting on the vessel because fish and marine mammals will be less likely to react to ship noise. This is an important new tool to support ecosystem research.

Henry B. Bigelow is the second in a fleet of four new fisheries survey vessels that will replace older ships. The first quiet vessel to be launched was Oscar Dyson, which also met or exceeded ICES standards. Oscar Dyson is home ported in Kodiak, Alaska, and conducts research on fisheries in the North Pacific, Gulf of Alaska and Bering Sea. Two more ships of the same class are under construction. The new vessel also represents a major accomplishment for the U.S. shipbuilding industry, which has shown it can construct dramatically quieter vessels using new hull designs and mounting devices for generators, engines and machines aboard the ship.

Henry B. Bigelow is to be commissioned on July 16, 2007 in Norfolk (VA, USA). She will support research conducted by NOAA's Northeast Fisheries Science Center in Woods Hole, Mass. and be homeported in New England. The New England base of operations is appropriate for a ship named in honor of one of the giants in oceanography and fisheries research.